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SIPDIS

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SUBJECT: FRENCH LUKEWARM TO SUPPORTING PARAMILITARY  
DISARMAMENT IN COLOMBIA

REF: STATE 207709

Classified By: Political Minister-Counselor Josiah Rosenblatt, reasons  
1.4 (b) and (d).

1. (C) Pol/MC and PolOff delivered reftel points November 16 to MFA A/S-equivalent for WHA Daniel Parfait, DAS-equivalent for South America Michel Pinard, and Venezuela desk officer Lionel Paradisi. Parfait stated that the French did not share our analysis of the success of the disarmament campaign, pointing to what he characterized as mounting tensions between the GoC and paramilitary forces. Extraditions of drug traffickers and human rights abusers were at the heart of the problem, according to Parfait, who acknowledged the difficult situation for both the GoC and U.S. Parfait cited the case of Don Berna as a good example of the problem: if he is extradited, the paramilitaries will abandon the disarmament process; if he remains in Colombia, he will continue to run his organization's criminal enterprises from prison and relations with the U.S. will be damaged. Parfait also expressed concern that paramilitaries could rearm and remobilize themselves at any time if they wished to do so.

2. (C) The GoF would be more open to supporting disarmament efforts if it thought they might be successful, Parfait said, but he judged the OAS process to be an impossible task. Additionally, Parfait noted that Europeans were being asked to fund an OAS initiative when Latin American countries were not participating. Ultimately, Parfait said, the paramilitary fighters were traffickers who have benefited financially from the drug trade, and it was difficult to envisage spending GoF funds to disarm them. However, Parfait suggested the GoF would be open to EU engagement in other areas of the peace process, such as victim assistance.

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Stapleton